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ABSTRACT

The River Forest (Illinois) District 90 wished to examine the educational literature on the effects of job sharing by teachers on student performance. This document presents a review of the literature and summarizes and synthesizes this information. Only limited information was found on this subject. However, anecdotal reports of the impact of job sharing on pupils were favorable. Survey data from questionnaires administered to teachers, principals, and parents also indicated positive perceptions of the effects of job sharing with respect to the quality of education. (JD)

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THE EFFECTS OF JOB SHARING ON STUDENT PERFORMANCE
LITERATURE REVIEW

RIVER FOREST SCHOOL DISTRICT 90

Prepared for:

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INTRODUCTION

Job sharing, generally defined as two employees sharing one full-time job, is becoming increasingly popular in the field of teaching. Some school districts have implemented job sharing as a partial solution to declining enrollments; other school systems have initiated job sharing upon the request of faculty who wish to work shorter hours, enabling them to ease into retirement, pursue advanced degrees, or be at home with young children.

A good deal of information exists on job sharing in the classroom. However, the focus of many such publications has to do with the advantages and disadvantages to employers and employees, and with guidelines for implementing this alternative approach to employment. River Forest District 90 wishes to examine the educational literature on the effects of job sharing on student performance. A computerized search on the ERIC database did identify a limited number of publications on this aspect of job sharing. It is the purpose of this report to summarize and synthesize this information.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Anecdotal Reports

A 1981 article in the American School Board Journal (Caplan and Caplan, 1982) summarizes anecdotal reports of administrators who have supervised job-shared classrooms. According to the authors, principals feel that job sharing improves education because teachers have more energy, share ideas and methods, and have more time to devote to their special fields. Other advantages listed by principals are that job sharing increases productivity, and helps districts recruit and retain competent people by meeting their personal needs. An administrator in Wichita states that,

> While there are some additional administrative costs -- keeping two sets of records, issuing two paychecks, and increased supervision -- two fresh teachers bring more more energy, skills, and enthusiasm to their jobs. Their enthusiasm is contagious, and their high morale improves the morale of the whole school. We get more than 100 percent for the job. (Caplan and Caplan, 1981, p. 33)

More anecdotal information comes from the Assistant Superintendent of the Palo Alto, California School District, who has been involved with job sharing over a seven year period. This administrator believes that more enthusiasm and excitement over teaching results from job sharing. He reports, in Job Sharing in the Schools:

> The concept of job sharing, is of course, a very exciting one. ...Our experience has indicated that job sharing certainly does require more time than simply a part-time job, but on the other hand, our experience also indicates that there are much greater results from job sharing. ...It seems obvious to me that students, therefore, benefit very directly from having two individuals who are enthusiastically working with them rather than one individual who is carrying a very heavy load. (Moorman, 1980, p. 5-6.)

Research Findings

The ERIC search did not identify any research studies with hard data on the effects of job sharing on student progress. That is, no studies were located which presented formal evidence of student performance under job sharing. Generally, any research which has been done on this aspect of job sharing has been limited to data obtained from the administration of surveys. In addition, surveys are most frequently given to principals, teachers and parents, and less often, to students. Student questionnaires provide direct evidence of pupils' perceptions of the effects of job sharing, whereas surveys administered to other involved parties provide indirect evidence on how job sharing impacts on students. Results of this survey research are presented in this section.

Research on job sharing in the classroom began as early as 1965 in Massachusetts. Fifteen districts participated in a job sharing program which was evaluated by Catalyst, a national research and educational organization, (Moorman, 1980). The results of the evaluation indicated that both principals and parents were enthusiastic about the program. Both groups surveyed felt that the experience of two different teachers was beneficial and stimulating. For further information on this study, see Groner and Brall (1970).

Another early experiment in job sharing was carried out in the Hartford, Connecticut Public Schools in 1970. An evaluation of the program, conducted by Connecticut University, included teacher and parent questionnaires and interviews with teachers, principals, and a sample of children. Details on the findings are available in the ERIC document ED 043 562. The overall conclusion was that the project was successful and should be continued.

A study on job sharing was carried out during the 1979-80 school year by the nonprofit organization, New Ways to Work. In this investigation, school districts were surveyed, either

through the use of written instruments or telephone interviews. In addition, information was gathered from on-site visits and from attendance at conferences of school officials.

In surveying administrators, this study found that of 43 respondents, all who were asked to cite advantages and disadvantages of job sharing agreed that the quality of education had not diminished as a result of this alternative approach to employment. Almost a third of the administrators believed that job sharing had improved education for their students. This improvement was attributed to: teachers being able to teach their strong subjects; ideas and methods being shared; and teachers having more energy than regular full-time teachers. Improved morale was also reported. Administrators said they noticed a very high morale among job sharers and that their attitudes helped improve the morale of the entire school.

More data are available from the state of Hawaii, whose Department of Education embarked on a three-year pilot project in job sharing for classroom teachers (Tanimura, 1981). In the final evaluation of the project, 217 teachers were interviewed or surveyed. In the last year of the three-year pilot, 46% of the job sharing positions were at the elementary level. Principals were also interviewed and a survey was administered to a random sample of parents whose elementary-age children participated in the program.

Several issues addressed in these surveys provide indirect evidence of the impact of job sharing on students. First, teachers and principals rated change in job productivity as a result of job sharing. The results were as follows: 76% of tenured teachers and 44% of principals felt that teachers' work productivity increased. Only one respondent reported a decrease in work productivity. On a related note, 71% of tenured teachers felt that job sharing had improved the quality of their work; none of the teachers felt the quality of their work had declined. Finally, teachers and principals were asked whether or not they felt that job sharing raised the quality of education for students. Three-fourths of the teachers, and a third of the principals believed that the quality of education has been improved; none of the principals, and only 2% of the teachers felt the quality of education had been lowered because of job sharing.

Positive reports also came from parents. Over 75% of those responding to the parent survey felt that the quality of their children's education had either remained the same or improved under the job sharing program. Only 8% felt the quality of education had dropped. Comments from parents indicated that most felt there were definite advantages to their children being in a classroom where two people shared teaching. Many parents said there had been a general improvement in their children's work and attitude towards

school. Some parents felt the situation provided variety, making school interesting and challenging. Others thought it was a good experience for their children to learn to relate to two different personalities. When asked if they wanted their child in a job-shared classroom the following year, 66% said they desired such placement, 21% had no preference, and 13% were opposed to the idea. Compared to an earlier survey, this represented a 16 point increase in the percentage of parents preferring a job-shared classroom.

No data from students were collected in the final evaluation of the pilot program. However, during an earlier assessment, a random sample of 89 students from 16 elementary classrooms were interviewed. At that time, 96% of students said they liked having two teachers, and would prefer to continue with two teachers for the next year. However, since the majority of these pupils were in the second grade or below, the evaluators were unsure of the validity of these reports.

Kalamazoo, Michigan is another district which surveyed teachers, principals and parents regarding their job sharing program (Lantz, 1983). Twenty-five staff members, 9 of whom were elementary classroom teachers, completed a faculty questionnaire. Overall, their responses showed a belief that students benefited from the opportunity to interact with a different teacher. Respondents felt that pupils gained by having access to different resources and instructional techniques. Principals also felt positively, and reported no disadvantages to this approach. Eight-one percent of the parents reported that their child responded positively to the job sharing experience; 11% reported no change and 7% felt the experience had a negative effect on their child. Ninety percent of parents responded favorably to having their child placed in a job sharing classroom for the next year.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

While job sharing is becoming more popular in education, there is limited information regarding its effects on student performance. Anecdotal reports of the impact of job sharing on pupils are favorable. Survey data from questionnaires administered to teachers, principals, and parents also indicate positive perceptions of the effects of job sharing with respect to the quality of education.

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